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Emplotment in the Social Mediatization of the Economy: The Poly-Storying of Economist Yanis Varoufakis

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Abstract

In the context of the Eurozone crisis the economy gained centre stage in a multitude of ordinary users' engagements on social media. Prompted by this, we propose a narrative perspective on the social mediatization of the economy informed by small stories research. We examine the intense mediatization of Yanis Varoufakis, former Minister of Finance of Greece (2015) as a case of media-afforded emplotment. We show that incidents involving Varoufakis in his negotiations with members of the Eurogroup are singled out as emblematic events, shared as breaking news, and satirically reworked, i.e., rescripted, mainly on YouTube and Twitter. Such rescriptings place him and the Greek economy in popular culture scenarios of one-to-one clashes and fights. Combined with iterated quotes (e.g., "you just killed the troika") and incongruous couplings (e.g., the Minister of Awesome), they lead to a widely available positioning of him as an unorthodox Minister of Finance. This affords and is afforded by what we call *poly-storying*, i.e., possibilities for bringing together multiple different plots and for the users' multiple modes of participation in them. An emplotment lens can enrich our understanding of 'lay,'

mass engagements with the economic crisis and political life beyond (sociolinguistic) accounts of the vernacularization of the public sphere.

Key words: economist, economy-in-crisis, emplotment, emblematic events, rescripting, quotes, incongruous couplings

Introduction

Language, politics and economics, as interconnected socio-cultural formations, are increasingly being mediatized and studied as such.¹ Contemporary mediatization is reflexively linked to processes of commoditization and involve close connections among the media, institutions, and social life (Agha, 2011, p. 163). This longstanding process of the interweaving of media with social life has been taken to a new level with the rise of social media. The increasing, unprecedented facilities for user-generated, easily distributed, replicable and scalable content (boyd, 2011) provide ample opportunities for ordinary users to comment on and engage with current affairs and socio-economic life. This has, in turn, problematized traditional mediatization processes, in particular earlier clear-cut distinctions between old and new digital media, interpersonal and mass communication, and expert and 'lay' communication (see chapters in Androutsopoulos, 2014).

The above changes in mediatization call for an update of the theoretical and analytical ways in which it is studied. Sociolinguistic studies have begun to show how the dynamic intermingling of media and the blurring of boundaries between private and public result

in changes in the discourse and styles of media language. Such changes push earlier noted tendencies toward conversationalization (Fairclough, 1994) even further, for example by making vernacular (i.e., informal, non-standard, non-specialist) language choices more readily available. This attested significance of the *vernacularization* of language (Coupland, 2014) resonates with media and cultural analyses that have shown the salience of *vernacular creativities* in social media engagements (Burgess, 2006). These encompass a range of everyday creative practices shaped outside the cultural value systems of either 'high culture' (art) or commercial creative practice (e.g., TV and broadcasting media). They involve, more specifically, shifting forms of public engagement ranging from physical participation to computer-mediated conversations on social media such as Facebook (Herring, 2010), as well as sophisticated multimedia productions, which are shaped according to the specific forms of users' participation (Georgakopoulou, 2015). There is still much scope for empirically studying such vernacularization processes and their implications for how 'lay' networked publics² engage with expert and specialist domains, traditionally seen as the prerogative of mainstream media commentators.

This article contributes to this growing line of inquiry by bringing in the importance of processes of *emplotment* (Ricoeur, 1991), i.e., the (re)creation of stories in engagements with socio-political life, including the economy. The economy has, since 2008, gained centre stage in such engagements, especially in the context of an array of social media-circulating Euro/crisis discourses (Boukala, 2014; Kryzanowski, Triandafyllidou, & Wodak, 2009; Wodak & Angouri, 2014). We see emplotment in such cases as sets of more

or less meaningful connections that are made through social media commentary and often viral reworkings of public life that circulate in stages or phases across multiple media (see Silverstein, 2011). These connections bring together key individuals, notably public figures (e.g., politicians), events, and outcomes in specific spatiotemporal scenarios. Our contention is that the creation of such plots in relation to key individuals ultimately implicates the specific expert domain with which they are associated. We will show how this is the case with a focus on the emplotment through intense social mediatization of Yanis Varoufakis, former Minister of Finance in Greece (January-June 2015). Yanis Varoufakis's short term in office, at the helm of an economy-in-crisis, quickly earned him a pop celebrity status, as attested in several media outlets and by commentators who portray him as a "showbiz economist" (e.g., The Guardian, 2015, Nov. 18).

As we will show, this celebrity status is intimately linked with emplotment on social media, which was instrumental in crafting a "biographically projectible brand"³ of a maverick Minister of Finance, that is, a 'moral profile' created "out of issues rendered of interest in the public sphere" (Lempert & Silverstein, 2012, p. 1). This developing characterization – which is parallel to what in marketing language would be called "brand" – becomes equated with what Silverstein (2011, p. 205) calls the "message" in political life: It has more to do with the crafting of a persona that the public come to see as an individual politician with specific personality attributes and less with any actual ideological or other positions.

We will specifically interrogate our data for how this emplotment of Yanis Varoufakis as a Minister of Finance and an economist is shaped in emblematic events, key actors and assessments, and how it becomes associated with networked audiences' engagements with the Greek economy-in-crisis. Our analysis of key postings on Twitter and YouTube during Varoufakis's term in office shows that certain incidents involving his negotiations with members of the Eurogroup are singled out as emblematic events, shared as breaking news, and satirically reworked, i.e., rescripted (Georgakopoulou, 2015; see 1.1. below for details). Such rescriptings systematically place him and the Greek economy in popular culture scenarios of one-to-one character clashes with 'evil' forces in Europe. Combined with iterated quotes (e.g., "you killed the troika") and incongruous couplings (e.g., "the Minister of Awesome"), they lead to a widely available positioning of Varoufakis as an unorthodox Minister of Finance, an outsider who "takes on the establishment" (as reads the description of his recent memoir *Adults in the Room*). This affords and is afforded by what we call *poly-storying*, i.e., possibilities for bringing together multiple different plots and for affording users' multiple modes of participation in them. We will conclude by reflecting on how a combined focus on emplotment and social mediatization can enrich our understanding of 'lay' mass engagements with the economic crisis and political life beyond existing sociolinguistic accounts of vernacularization of the public sphere.

Small Stories Research and Social Media

Small stories research, a paradigm for narrative and identities analysis, was developed to account, conceptually and analytically, for a range of narrative activities that had not been sufficiently studied in conversational contexts, nor had their importance for the

interlocutors' identity work been recognized. These involve stories that present fragmentation and open-endedness of tellings, exceeding the confines of a single speech event and resisting a neat categorization of beginning–middle–end. They are invariably co-constructed (between teller and audience), rendering the sole teller's story ownership problematic. They report mundane events from the teller's everyday life rather than big complications or disruptions. In previous work, Georgakopoulou (2007) made the case for the significance of such stories in everyday life, as part of the fabric of social practices that ordinary people engage in. More recently, she has argued that small stories research prefigured the current situation, when *social media affordances*⁴ have made stories with such features more widely available and visible in mass, (semi)-public arenas of communication (Georgakopoulou, 2013a). She has specifically been systematizing small stories as a paradigm for the analysis of social media, as part of the project "Life-Writing of the Moment: The Sharing and Updating Self on Social Media" (www.ego.media-org⁵). The project is charting the *multi-semiotic forms* (linguistic/textual, visual, auditory) used in sharing everyday life (personal or public and political) as it happens, on a range of social media platforms (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), in *emergent and remediated genres* (e.g., selfies, retweets, spoof videos, and remixes) and, where applicable, on the basis of specific (personal, political, social, etc.) incidents and issues (e.g., the euro-zone crisis).

Drawing on Georgakopoulou's study of how small stories develop and are distributed on social media, we define emplotment flexibly, as creating more or less meaningful connections among characters, events in specific place and time, actions and interactions, assessments, and/or resolutions. We also accept that it is shaped by well-

attested social media affordances (cf. Marwick & boyd, 2011). These include portability, replicability, and remixing facilities and the fact that different and often unforeseen audiences may tune into any circulated story. It has been shown that such affordances render stories more multiply authored, intertextual, and diverse than their conventional definitions (e.g., Page, 2010). Georgakopoulou's research (2015, 2016 a,b) on small stories on social media has specifically attested to the following emplotment features that need to be identified as part of examining the making and sharing of stories:

- (i) **Emblematic events**, i.e., key shared moments that emerge as central in the mediatization of specific individuals and current affairs on account of their distribution and iterative invocation in (re) tellings;
- (ii) **Key actors** who, through distribution of specific emblematic events, become 'characters' in circulating stories, often with very different roles and identities than those in 'real life';
- (iii) **Portable and iterated assessments**: evaluations of key actors' speech, action, values, and style. These are picked out for circulation and, helped by replicability and distribution, often lead to repeatable, recyclable 'quotes' that are indexical of assessments;
- (iv) **Tellership**: participation roles, rights, and affordances in the distribution of a story, including co-narration possibilities.

Georgakopoulou's work (2014, 2015a) has shown that the circulation of the above plot ingredients and the connections established among them rely on two social media-

afforded practices:

- (i) ***Narrative stancetaking***: The brevity and live-sharing afforded by social media environments allow for – and encourages – announcements of stories (*breaking news*) as opposed to full tellings. Conventionalized story-framing devices have been found to be used to suggest that there is a story in the making, a story that can be told, developed, and updated later (Georgakopoulou, 2013a, 2017). These devices include: reference to time, place, events, and characters, and/or condensed, indexical associations among them. Subsequent audience engagements (e.g., with comments) and transposition can help turn a narrative stance on an incident into a story.
- (ii) ***Rescripting***: This involves the deployment of media affordances (e.g., video-editing, remixing) for visually and/or verbally manipulating and reworking specific incidents (mainly relating to news events). Rescripting routinely entails the creation of humorous, satirical takes on an incident, and thus it is commonly associated with YouTube satirical videos (e.g. spoofs, memes, remixes, and mashups; Georgakopoulou, 2014). It also involves manipulations of plot ingredients so as to create more or less cryptic analogies between an 'original' incident and other already circulated stories. For instance, the place and time of a shared event changes so that the original actors in it become 'characters' in another story (Georgakopoulou, 2015).

To forge links among the emplotment features presented above, the social media affordances and environments that they are shared in, and their 'tellers' and participation roles, we draw on positioning analysis in its connections with small stories (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2013b). In so doing, we seek to identify and establish any iterativity (i.e., systematic recurrence) in the following:

- (i) How characters are presented in the taleworld, their relations, evaluative attributions, activities, and overall placement in time and place (*Level 1*)
- (ii) How a story is locally occasioned and distributed. Who participates and how? Who ratifies, legitimates, or contests which part of the story? Who co-authors, what and how? (*Level 2*)
- (iii) What aspects of the key character(s) are presented as 'stable' and continuous, 'biographically projectible brands' beyond specific emblematic events and across circulated stories? (*Level 3*). This emerges from the interaction of Levels 1 & 2.

Based on the above framework, our specific questions for the emplotment of Yanis Varoufakis are as follows:

- (i) How is Yanis Varoufakis emplotted as a (former) Minister of Finance and as an economist on social media? How does this relate to and implicate the Greek economy-in-crisis?
- (ii) More specifically, what is shared and, through distribution, becomes widely available, as emblematic events, key actors, and assessments? How are these inter-connected

and, if applicable, rescripted? How are they taken up in networked audiences' engagements?

Methods and Data

Small Stories and Remix Methods

Small stories research requires open-ended, flexible methods of data selection and collection so as to suit the flexible definition of small stories as a process: Stories often emerge through engagement with a specific incident beyond a single event, posting, or platform. What is signalled as a story has been found to have organized implications for the ensuing participation modes and for how relational stances on the post and/or poster will be displayed (Georgakopoulou, 2015). Small stories research is thus compatible with ethnographic perspectives, in particular adaptive digital ethnography that is open to imaginative, reflexive, and even playful methods (Horst & Miller, 2012; Pink et al., 2016). This involves taking flexible routes to what is investigated to suit the mobile, ever-shifting landscape of social media. It also involves being open to the use of 'remix' methods, in Markham's terms (2013). In the spirit of social media practices of remixing, remix methods bring together unlikely resources in imaginative and reflexive ways. For instance, the researcher's own immersion and participation in social media culture, involving processes of catching up, sharing, and real-time tracking so as to document iterativity of specific phenomena, are recognized as a major part of the development of ethnographic understandings.

In addition, Georgakopoulou (2016a, b) has adapted *digitally native* methods (i.e., specifically applying to online settings) for fieldwork, for instance, by observing systematically, as a 'lurking' participant in a specific site, activities and postings, so as to identify key posts and participants. Some of these methods involve *auto-phenomenology*, that is, the researcher's reflexivity about her own position, stakes, and interests in the field of social media engagements. While it is beyond the scope of this article to discuss fully our own position on the topic of study as UK-based Greek, female, left-leaning academics, our personal, subjective, and in many ways emotionally charged engagements with the Greek crisis are worth noting. Tracking Varoufakis' mediatized highs and lows in a process of promised re-negotiation of the terms of the Greek bail-out and ahead of the referendum of 2015, which left many voters disappointed, could not involve, in our case, a purely dispassionate, etc perspective. Alongside many Greek supporters of the anti-austerity agenda, we too experienced a mix of fears, hopes, and frustrations in the continuing escalation of the severe economic crisis in Greece. This involvement may inadvertently have biased us toward specific kinds of social mediatizations of Varoufakis, i.e., confrontational, satirical, and largely produced by Greek-speaking users, from the maze of possibilities. We thus acknowledge that, despite employing social media metrics (e.g., most-viewed videos), our research selections and angles are by no means exhaustive, and they are inevitably mediated by our own positionality (Riessman, 2001).

The dataset

Yanis Varoufakis was thrust onto the public scene during the crisis and ended up serving

as a (short-lived) Minister of Finance for six months, from January to July 2015 under the coalition government of the leftwing party Syriza and the rightwing party Independent Greeks (ANEL). During Varoufakis's term in ministerial office, an unprecedented media fascination developed around him, not just as an economics expert, but as the 'face' of the fight against the Greek economic crisis. This fascination went hand-in-hand with, and was possibly fuelled by, his own prolific self-fashioning as a media persona: a prolific blogger and willing interviewee in the Greek and international presses, Varoufakis made his views as an economist on the Greek crisis widely available, long before he took up a ministerial post.

Through his blog *Thoughts for the post-2008 world* and his Twitter account that counts more than 731K followers, Yanis Varoufakis has projected an identity primarily as "an economist thrust into politics" (a spur-of-the-moment politician), at the same time furnishing a sharp contrast between himself and other ministers of finance who are professional "politicians." An academic economist with expertise in game theory, he has taught in Britain, Australia, the USA, and Greece and was also appointed in 2012 as economist-in-residence at Valve, an online gaming company. Since he left office, he has been voicing his views on Europe in public talks and conversations (with Noam Chomsky and with Jeremy Corbyn), opinion editorials, online articles, and books, including a memoir of his time in office, drawing on his own recordings of meetings and the diary he kept during that time. He is one of the co-founders of the pan-European left-wing Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25; 2016-now).

Data collection for this study was based on real-time tracking of the most intense period of Yanis Varoufakis' mediatization, during his six-month period in ministerial office, by identifying and following the circulation of emblematic events and key phases in sharing. The mediatization of his persona has continued through the time of writing, currently capitalizing, for example, on the relevance of his former ministerial experience of negotiating directly with the European Union for UK's Brexit negotiations (The Guardian, 2018, 8 Nov.; Newsnight, 2018, 22 Nov.). Drawing on Georgakopoulou's (2014) previous study of the social mediatization of the Greek crisis, we followed the principle of tracking specific incidents as they circulated rather than focusing on a single social media platform from the outset. For that reason, we employed the concepts of *telling case* (Mitchell, 1984) and *critical moment* (Vaajala, Arminen, & De Rycker, 2013) to identify postings worthy of further investigation. Both concepts suggest that a micro-scale event or incident may provide a glimpse of meanings, ideas, and values that are taken for granted or remain tacit under 'normal' circumstances. Tracking a critical moment or telling case is routinely done with the help of adaptive ethnography, as discussed above. To track the phases and stages of sharing, we employ popularity indexes and Google trends that show popular postings and when the circulation of an incident peaks and on which platform.

In total, we analysed nine satirical videos and their accompanying 4,030 comments; 622 tweets; and 13 news articles relating to an emblematic event at the climax of the Greek bailout negotiations, right after the elections of Syriza (see Table 1 below), as well as six key interviews that Varoufakis gave after leaving office reflecting on his time as a

Minister (Appendix; Table 2).

Social media platform	Date	Title of video/medium	Data
YouTube	30 th Jan. 2015	<i>Thug Life</i>	7 videos 294 comments (cut-off point for collection: July 2015)
	5 th Feb. 2015	<i>V for Varoufakis</i>	3,000 comments (cut-off point for collection: July 2015)
	21 st Feb. 2015	<i>Rap Battle</i>	764 comments (cut-off point for collection: July 2015)
Twitter	30 th Jan. 2015	<i>You Killed the Troika</i>	622 posts (cut-off point: 2 Feb. 2015) 13 news articles (cut-off point: 1 Feb. 2015)
	February-July 2015	<i>Top hashtags related with Varoufakis</i>	

Table 1. Data

Sharing Emblematic Events

Emplotments of Yanis Varoufakis in emblematic events emerged concurrently with his role as Finance Minister (January 2015) and continued until his resignation (July 2015). The first emblematic event we identified is linked to Varoufakis' initial meeting as Minister with his Dutch counterpart and Chief of Eurogroup, Jeroen Dijsselbloem in Athens, just five days (January 30, 2015) after the coming to power of Syriza-ANEL. At the joint press briefing following the meeting, Varoufakis referred to the Troika, the international committee of lenders, as a "*rottenly constructed committee*" with which the Syriza-ANEL government was not going to co-operate. Upon hearing this statement, Jeroen Dijsselbloem laid down his headset and allegedly whispered to Yanis Varoufakis "You just killed the Troika"; Varoufakis, in turn, replied, "Wow – This is an unearned compliment."⁶

This tense conversation was rescripted on the same day on YouTube as a *Thug Life* meme entitled *Varoufakis thug life (OFFICIAL): Ο Γιάννης Βαρουφάκης ρίχνει άκυρο στην Τρόικα* (Yanis Varoufakis cancels out Troika). The video is an instance of Thug Life Remixes, which emerged as a meme on Reddit in 2014, peaked in 2015, and have been in decline ever since. Thug Life Remixes typically begin with home movies of pre-adolescents using overly confrontational or expletive language, followed by a freeze-frame at a close-up image of the subject and an instrumental fade out to Dr Dre's 1992 gangsta rap song *Nuthin' But a G Thang*. Thug Life videos feature "the unexpected thug life" as exemplified mainly by children "with attitude" who engage in acts of verbal defiance (YouTube Thug Life, 2014).

The parting dialogue from that first meeting also circulated virally on Twitter, with

posting activity peaking immediately after the news bulletin on Mega TV at 9:00 p.m. (local time) revealing the words exchanged. Posting activity continued through the next couple of days. The collected tweets (see Table 1) are both in Greek and English and include retweets, which are an integral part in this type of mimetic sharing. The analysis of this emblematic event was complemented by related media reports on the meeting published between January 30 and February 12, 2015.

The other key posting we analysed involved the popular video "*V for Varoufakis*" produced by controversial German comedian and TV personality Jan Böhmermann for *Neo Magazin Royale*, his late-night talk show. The video was uploaded on February 25, 2015 and became popular very quickly: it boasts 3,652,201 views and 4,724 comments by 'lay' networked publics (last checked: November 25, 2018). The video was posted in English (with the odd Greek word), but the main languages used in the comments are English, German, and Greek.

Additional emblematic events that were analyzed for supplementary insights include the *Rap Battle – Dijsselbloem vs. Varoufakis* broadcast on YouTube on February 21, 2015. We also considered the first contemporary political Greek comic "*WOW (V for V)*" (Ariadni, Aris, & Jimkos, 2016). Finally, we analyzed (selectively) Varoufakis' own reflexive storying of his term in office and presentation of a biographical brand of an economist in interviews, newspaper articles, podcasts, and public talks (see Table 2; Appendix).

Drawing on small stories and positioning, as discussed above, we tracked in the data the

emplotment features (see 1.1 above) and analyzed any iterated connections among them. We also looked into if and how any of these emplotment features are taken up in comments on video-based postings. In this analysis, we also took into account and coded the participation and interactional features of each analyzed comment: e.g., which are the most viewed and engaged comments? (at the time of our cut-off point which was the resignation of Varoufakis from office; see Table 1 above); is a comment atomized or part of a thread?

Analyzing Emplotment

Rescripting Emblematic Events

In satirical rescriptings of emblematic events, such as "*Thug Life*," "*You Killed the Troika*," or "*V for Varoufakis*," Varoufakis's emplotment is based on his emergence as a character positioned *in contest with* other characters:

- (i) Varoufakis versus Jeroen Dijsselbloem, his Dutch former counterpart and chief of the Eurogroup;
- (ii) Varoufakis versus the Troika, the tripartite committee of international lenders made up of the European Commission, the European central bank, and the International Monetary Fund;
- (iii) Varoufakis versus the German Finance Minister, and most ardent supporter of austerity policies, Wolfgang Schäuble;
- (iv) Varoufakis versus the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel.

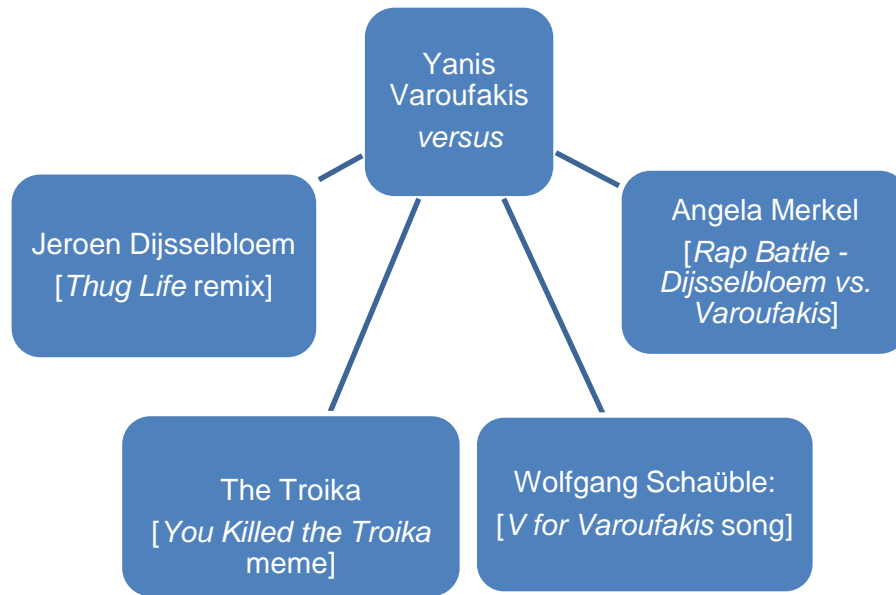


Figure 1 Varoufakis' emplotment as a character in contest with other characters

The "*Thug Life*" remix, in particular, which includes three snippets from the press conference following the meeting of January 30, 2015, picks out Yanis Varoufakis's statement about the Troika being a "rottenly constructed committee" and renders it into a freeze-frame: A close-up image of Yanis Varoufakis is quickly followed by the addition of sunglasses and a joint to the image (see Image 1), alongside a fade out to the Niggaz Wit Attitudes' (N.W.A.) song "*Straight Outta Compton*" ("*Fuck tha police coming straight from the underground, young nigga got it bad*").



Image 1 Screenshot of Thug Life remix video, YouTube

This remixing of frames constructs Varoufakis's words as overtly confrontational and emblemizes him as a "Thug" figure.⁷ In this type of character assessment, the (former) Minister of Finance becomes a symbol of defiance in the context of Greece's bailout negotiations with its European partners.⁸

The representation of Varoufakis as a "thug" is further reworked in rescriptings of the reported parting words exchanged between Dijsselbloem and Varoufakis ("*You Killed the Troika – WoW*") at the end of their joint press conference on January 30, 2015. In these rescriptings, Varoufakis tends to be depicted as "the winner" of verbal confrontations with his European partners, even if this is not translated into any actual re-negotiation of the terms of the Greek bailout, which was his stated aim. Positive assessments are also attested in circulating descriptions of Varoufakis in YouTube comments and tweets as "the man" or "the Greek hero" (Examples 1 – 2; italics added) and in memes depicting him as a "good man - troika killer" (see Image 2).

Example 1

@user1: *He's the man* @yanisvaroufakis – Caught on Tape: Dijsselbloem to Varoufakis: 'You just killed the troika'.

Example 2

@user2: *Varoufakis the Greek hero.* 'You just killed Troika', whispered Dutch Finance Minister, and Eurogroup Chief.

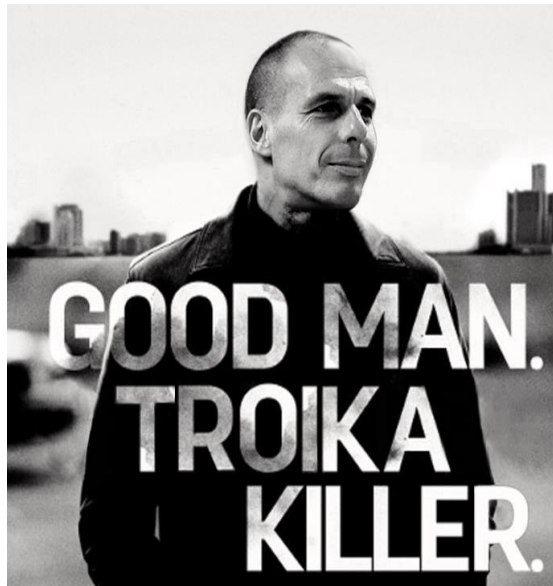


Image 2 Meme about Yanis Varoufakis (Source: *Unruly hearts* blog)

Incipient positive assessments shared in relation to the emblematic event "*You Killed the Troika*" are gradually seen to sediment and become part of a widely available positioning, as we will discuss below. It is worth noting here the political Greek comic "*WOW (V for*

V)" (Ariadni, Aris, & Jimkos, 2016), the plot of which features an extended emplotment of Yanis Varoufakis as a superhero who puts himself in the service of the Greek people by setting out to fight the Troikan army of the powerful elites, the dark forces of the banking cliques, and the representatives of economic elites that dominate the world. Importantly, his economic theory and equations are presented as his weapons in this fight. The mission becomes that of killing the monster, in this case the European Minotaur,⁹ and ending its financial tyranny. The plot of an economics fight extends to the initial of his name, V, serving as a code name for Victory. It is also a powerful echo of the anarchist revolutionary "V" depicted in Alan Moore and David Lloyd's graphic novel *V for Vendetta*, which became a symbol for the Anonymous and Occupy movements.

Such rescriptings of emblematic events and one-on-one character clashes between Varoufakis and Greece's creditors as "the enemies" need to be seen in the context of circulating characterizations of the former Minister of Finance in newspapers as well as in specific media reactions to the incident. In many cases of such reporting, the meeting is discussed drawing on the register of war and conflict (e.g., "the battle lines between Greece and its creditors were drawn in Athens," *The Guardian*, 2015, Jan. 20) or assessed as part of a military strategy for wielding power and leveraging social support for it.

In other reports, however, Varoufakis's statement about the Troika was framed by comments on his unconventional dress style, as shown in the following extract taken from a BBC news article:

Example 3

Breaking with tradition, Mr Varoufakis wore an open-neck shirt – hanging loose at his belt. Mr Dijsselbloem was dressed conventionally. On the troika, Mr Varoufakis said "we have no intention of co-operating with a three-member committee whose goal is to implement a programme whose logic we consider anti-European" (BBC, 2015, Jan 30).

Comments on Varoufakis's dress style in the media, although open to a range of interpretations depending on the context where such characterizations appear, enter and sediment his characterization as a *defiant actor* in the political scene, e.g., the "leather jacket" versus "the suits" in the "international media catwalk" (EuroCrisisPress, 2015, Jan.25). This is also noted by Theodoropoulou (2016), who suggests that the mediatization of Varoufakis is based on "his powerful, anti-conformist, unconventional and rebellious persona, which transgresses the expected standardness associated with his institutional role as a minister" (p. 11).

Media references to Yanis Varoufakis also revolve around his preferred mode of transport, e.g., "the motorbike riding finance minister" (BBC, 2015, July 9) vs. the "bullet-proof cars," and his expertise, e.g., the "macro-economist," "radical economist," "erratic Marxist" (Varoufakis, 2015) vs. professional politicians. Varoufakis was also recurrently described as "the emerging rock star of Europe's anti-austerity uprising" (The Telegraph, 2016, Feb. 3), whose motto could be "never waste an opportunity to antagonize" (Politico, 2015, December 24). In self-reflective articles and interviews, Varoufakis

himself emphasized his confrontational stance vis-à-vis European partners, drawing on a vocabulary of 'war.' This is evident, for instance, in his statement to Germany's *Tagespiegel* in June 2015, where he noted that Greece's creditors have turned the negotiations "into a war"; or in his interview in *Open Democracy* in May 2016, where he acknowledged that: "We challenged austerity unsuccessfully, we were *defeated*, and so we *surrendered* in July" (n.p.; italics added).

This emphasis on confrontation, clashes, and ultimately, a lost war thus became part of Varoufakis's biographical brand, fashioned partly by himself and partly by social media engagements with him. It is notable that a comparable waging of a (social) media 'war' has been suggested about Greece-in-crisis overall: a confrontation with Europe by a weak country through a fight and dispute over not just economic facts and figures, but also of words, images, and values (Salmon, 2015). From this point of view, the biographizing of Varoufakis as a defiant actor can be seen as an embodiment and a person-centred iconography of a national economy in crisis.

Assessments as incongruous couplings

Emplotting Varoufakis, as discussed above, capitalizes on the reiteration and circulation of incongruous couplings. Couplings refer to "the binding of two meanings across paradigmatic systems of potential and may be involved in larger syndromes of meaning [...]; [they are] related to the simpler notion of collocations, two linguistic items occurring near the text" (Zappavigna, 2011: p. 795). As Zappavigna has shown (2011, 2014),

couplings of ideation and evaluation are used to affiliate users around shared values (in her case Obama supporters or coffee lovers).

In the case of Varoufakis, assessments of his persona that are used in the media and social media frustrate expectations of what should co-occur with what, by introducing an element of incongruity between his professional role (ideation) and assessments of him (evaluation): e.g., "Minister of Awesome" as opposed to "Minister of Finance." The resulting incongruous couplings are integrated into rescripted plots of emblematic events. Inserting a Minister of Finance into plots that construct him as a Thug and an action hero, as we saw above, implicates the creation of assessments of Varoufakis that partake of both worlds: the world of economics and politics, and the world of an action-hero. The unexpected act of putting the two worlds together brings forward an element of satire, which works well with the style of satirical YouTube videos, as we will see below.

The role of incongruous couplings is evident in the satirical emplotment of Varoufakis in the video *V for Varoufakis*. The video extends circulating depictions of Yanis Varoufakis as a defiant hero to parallelisms of him with the Greek God Hercules, well-known for his triumphant victory over the giants, thanks to his massive strength. These parallelisms are rendered through the following evaluations of the persona of Varoufakis, which iconicize Varoufakis and background the ideational content (Varoufakis as a finance minister) in favour of interpersonal meaning (Varoufakis as an icon, rallying people's support and alignment) based on the use of parallelisms.

- (i) The coupling of Hercules with economics in Varoufakis' depiction as a "financial Hercules";
- (ii) The assessments "Greek Minister of Awesome! Relentless Varoufakis!," "Greek Minister of OMFG!," and "Maverick Varoufakis!", which present a conflicting semiology of perceptions of conventionality associated with a ministerial post and a 'cool' persona;
- (iii) The descriptions of him as "half-God, half-souvlaki," which draw on clashing stereotypical connotations of ancient and modern Greece;
- (iv) The word play of Hell with Hellenic in the lyric "jacket collar raised, on a black motorcycle he puts the 'hell' into Hellenic" (*'V for Varoufakis'*), which constructs Varoufakis as an economist who is both Greek and revengeful (destined to bring hell).

Such couplings entered the mediatized iconography of Varoufakis across different media. Their popularity is attested, for example, in invocations of such parallelisms of Varoufakis with Hercules in tweets posted about the Greek referendum in 5 July 2015:



Image 3. Image accompanying tweet

@user4: 21st Century Hercules, #Varoufakis #Tripras #Eurogroup

Example 4. Tweets depicting Varoufakis as Hercules

(i) Jul 10, 2015

@user3: Varoufakis es Hércules, Ben Affleck es Batman y Casillas el porter del Madrid

(Trans. from Spanish: 'Varoufakis is Hercules, Ben Affleck is Batman and Cassilas the goalkeeper of Madrid')

(ii) Jul 6, 2015

@user4: Mandado uma cartinha pra Disney perguntado porque no desehno do Hércules não tem nem um nome parecido com Tsakalotos ou Varoufakis

(Trans. from Portuguese: 'Sent a letter to Disney asking why the drawing of Hercules doesn't feature the name of Tsakalotos or Varoufakis')

(iii) Jul 6, 2015

@user5: Si os preguntan el nombre de cuatro heroes griegos responded: Léonidas, Hércules, Aquiles y Varoufakis

(Trans. from Spanish: 'If they ask you the name of four Greek heroes reply: Leonidas, Hercules, Achilles and Varoufakis')

The above tweets, which were sampled using the hashtags most commonly associated with Varoufakis (see Table 1) circulated during the Greek referendum in July 2015 and appeared beyond Greek-speaking social media. Such tweets suggest the sedimentation of assessments in the rescripting of Varoufakis as a Greek god-like 'hero.'

Studies of couplings on social media platforms (Zappavigna, 2011, 2014; Georgakopoulou 2016a) have shown: a) the recurrence of a pairing of meanings or modalities, enhanced by wide distribution or by conventional expectations of a specific type of response to specific posts; and b) the performative, community-creation roles that these have. In this case, the incongruous couplings of assessments of Varoufakis establish pairings of ideational and interpersonal meaning in incongruous ways, prompting users' alignment (or disalignment) with his battle against the European Union.

Having examined the rescripting of emblematic events in terms of the emplotment and assessment of key characters, we turn in the next section to the selection of key characters' quotes and their insertion into rescriptings.

Quotes as Portable Assessments

Rescriptings of emblematic events are shared on Twitter as breaking news. The microblogging platform affords quick, fragmentary posting activity, which we have characterized as "ecstatic sharing, i.e., affective sharing in the here-and-now of instantaneous proximity with networked audiences" (Giaxoglou, 2018). In rescriptings of the emblematic event of Varoufakis's tense press conference with Dijsselbloem, a brief quote ("You just killed the Troika – wow") was lifted from the event and rendered into a portable for further circulation, distribution, and commenting. This is evident in the outburst of tweets that quickly followed the announcement of the parting dialogue on Mega TV at 9:00 pm through to the next day. During this period, the quote was shared including one or both turns from the reported dialogue (e.g., "You just killed the troika" and/or "Wow"). It thus associated narrative stancetaking devices with a breaking news story, specifically with what Labov (1972, 2013) would call an *abstract* consisting of a reference to time (just), a key event (in the past tense), (implied) characters, and indexical associations of confrontation between them. The more this quote was shared, the more it became a *reference*, a brief and elliptical allusion to the incident (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2012, pp. 109-110).

This type of sharing creates conditions of story reciprocity for further participants (see also 3.4 below). For instance, tweeters may take up the proposal of the quote for how the referred to and implied story needs to be understood, and amplify the fighting scenario by providing a positive assessment of Varoufakis, as in the tweet below:

Example 5

@user6: Βαρουfuckis και δερνεις ('Varoufuckis and you kick ass')

Or, they may personalize and bring in their own motive reactions to the quote, as in example 6 below. Usually this is done with references to songs¹⁰ and other shared popular culture texts.

Example 6

@user7: You just killed the troika. I just died in your arms tonight YOLO [i.e., you only live once]

These possibilities for participation extend beyond what has been described in the literature as co-narration and instead constitute cases of what we call *poly-storying*, as we discuss further below.

The quote "you just killed the troika – wow" has been extremely portable beyond the original setting of the press conference and the breaking news of it on Twitter. Its transmedia and trans-semiotic mobilisation from posters, photoshopped materials, T-shirts (images 4-5 below), or other artefacts, and a WoW comic cover (image 6) can be described as *trans-plotment*: the quote, a narrative stancetaking on an emblematic event, becomes a reference story to it through sharing, but it also becomes part of new plots in its distribution.



Image 4. *Tostadora* Woman's T-shirt (<http://www.tostadora.com>)



Image 5. *Tostadora* Men's T-Shirt (by aritzcirbian) (<http://www.tostadora.com>)

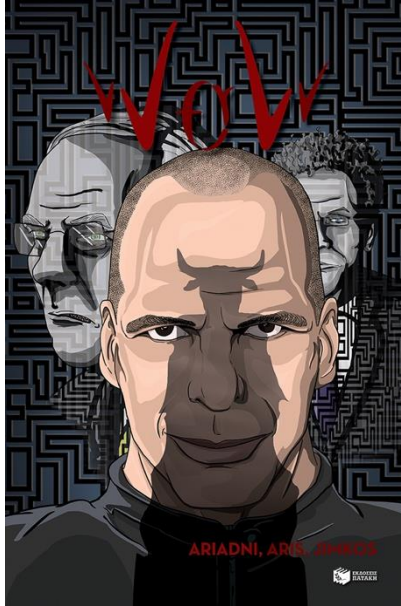


Image 6. Cover of WoW comic, 2016

Trans-plotment is created on the back of already shared rescripted accounts of emblematic events. For instance, the above images recycle the clash between the Minister of Finance and the Troika in counter-stories of financial institutions as the personified 'evil,' encoding moral values (good versus evil). In this way, the multi-semiotic manipulations of the original plot through rescripting and the intertextual links between the emblematic event and its creative reworkings are reminiscent of *transmedia narratives* (Harvey, 2013; Jenkins, 2008). In transmedia narratives, the mediatized 'story' takes shape in multiple forms across multiple media platforms from varied tellers and across time, attesting to the experiencing of mediatization as panmediation, i.e., as the co-existence, permeation, and interaction of an ever-changing combination of media in society (DeLuca et al., 2012, p. 487). In this way, the mediatized 'story' spreads, rendering visible particular aspects of social and political life otherwise hidden from

view (Thompson, 2005). At the same time, the wide distribution of the mediatized story sediments key events, characters, and stances around Yanis Varoufakis's transmedially constructed biographical aura. In this case, social media affordances of portability and multiple audience engagement are key to the transmedia emplotment of Varoufakis. Below, we will show the main possibilities for such forms of multi-engagement.

Rescripting the Minister of Finance: Multi-Participation

YouTube satirical videos have emerged as a prime circulation phase for news stories (Georgakopoulou, 2014). In this case, too, YouTube served as the primary site for satirical rescriptings of Yanis Varoufakis, affording users multiple possibilities for multiple types and modes of participation. The functions or social effects of this kind of satire and humour about social and political matters are not obvious, and it is beyond the scope of this article to fully explore them. Based on existing research on political humour, however, it can be noted that political humour often ends up reinforcing dominant values and views on politics, rather than promoting radical thinking (see Tsakona & Popa, 2011, p. 2).

Authors of the analyzed comments on the video in our data tend to co-author the rescripted plot(s) of the video. In Example 7 below, the commenter suggests that turning Varoufakis into the late rapper Tupak from whom Thug Life evolved would have added impact to the memetic video.

Example 7

Georgio111: *Αφού του έβαλες την φράση thug life έπρεπε να τον κάνεις 2pac στο τέλος και να παίζει το hold on be strong!! Χαχαχαχα πάντως τέλειοο*

‘Since you went for thug life you should have turned him into 2pac at the end and have the song hold on be strong playing. Haha though perfect’

[From comments on the *Varoufakis Thug Life* video]

It is typical for comments to pick up on different aspects of the circulating story, leaping for instance from positive assessments of Yanis Varoufakis to an appreciation of comedian Jan Böhmermann, as Example 8 illustrates. In this process, users build new associations¹¹ (in this case of Varoufakis with Böhmermann) in the branching out of the story:

Example 8

Snoopy243: OMFG, this man is soo awesome!!! Varoufakis? Nooo, Böhmermann!!!! He's raising the average German IQ by about 5 percent! And isn't it a cosmic joke that GERMANY of all countries now has a Staatsaffäre because of its HUMOR going too far? There IS hope, I tell you, there IS hope!

[From comments on the *V for Varoufakis* video]

In addition, new audiences (i.e. beyond those interested in the Greek/Eurozone crisis and him personally) seem to tune into the Varoufakis story. We can hypothesize that the commenter above is a fan of the popular comedian Böhmermann and that is what took

him to Varoufakis's video in the first place. Similarly, many comments on *Thug Life: Varoufakis* suggest that the users are, on some level, thug life video *connoisseurs* or enthusiasts (as in example 7 above). This allows them to co-construct Varoufakis as a rescripted character, e.g., "a gangsta," "a roadman," or a "Thug Life" character, as illustrated in Example 9:

Example 9

akazabubu: *step up nigga*

O Koinodontas: To step up το 2 ή το 3? ('Step up 2 or 3?')

[From comments on *V for Varoufakis* video]

Other typical storying possibilities include:

(i) the ratification of character contests, e.g., between Yanis Varoufakis and key characters in the emblematic event, such as Wolfgang Schäuble:

Example 10

Zarathustra: I'm german and I'm here to say that he's amazing and he should kick Schäubles skinny ass.

[From comments on *V for Varoufakis*]

(ii) assessments of both the rescripted plot of the memetic video and the original:

Example 11

DailyPointless: *gamise kai to video kai o varoufakis!*

('both awesome - the video and Varoufakis!')

[From comments on *V for Varoufakis*]

(iii) comments that may include (i) and (ii) above, at the same time as talking about the Greek economy. These longer contributions routinely occur as part of threads rather than as atomized comments. Our zoomed-in analysis of the most replied-to comment in our data, from the video *V for Varoufakis*, which attracted 159 comments, reveals that the Greek economy and economic terms (e.g., 'taxes,' 'economic output,' 'big bang') are introduced in personalized terms, that is, as part of the commenters' lived experience and of stories of living in hardship. We can see this in the initial comment by snoopy199:

Example 12

I have to say this video is absolutely brilliant. I haven't laughed like this in quite a while! But here's what I see through my eyes. I'm 15 years old (Greek), and I have to tell everyone asking for their money... I do not have it. I'm not sure who has it (you can read that in other comments), but I can tell you I don't have it, nobody that I know has it and nobody I don't know has it either. The Greek population below the poverty line was 20% in 2009 and I'm pretty sure it hasn't changed for the best, if it

has changed at all. The only reason I can afford my PC, internet, heating or even food is because of relatives I have in Belgium and without them I would live in some hole in the ground, eating worms after mushing them with stones. Now, about Varoufakis. I don't know what media outside of Greece says, but here he is a symbol of hope. If he doesn't make a difference then we all know that nobody can.

[From comments on *V for Varoufakis*]

It is hard to know which of the statements in the above comment are deliberately exaggerated and provocative.¹² It is notable, however, that the majority of comments that respond to it follow the style of integrating any economic commentary into the commenters' personal lives and kinship networks (e.g., my grandmother, my son, etc.) at the same time as engaging with the video and the satirical rescripting of Varoufakis.

Memetic videos foster possibilities for commenters to appreciate the production and performance of the video and to engage with the story of the video, often by making links to the original incident as well as personalizing (Georgakopoulou, 2015). Commenters may specifically refer to scenes, address the characters directly, or echo words or catchphrases that were lifted from the original incident and recycled in the creative reworkings of it (cf. Leppanen & Hakinen, 2014).

As we can also see in the comments above, multi-contributions are important in the ways in which the videos are produced and engaged with. In addition, the rescripting of Varoufakis as an action hero, a character in contest with powerful Eurogroup leaders and

elites, seems to create conditions of storied participation, and, more often than not, of *aligned storied participation* for commenters.¹³ This means that commenters tend to align with the stance in the original posting and the rescripting of Varoufakis or to elaborate on and amplify it, often on the basis of lived experience, as in example 11 above.

Concluding Discussion

The Emplotment of Varoufakis (and the Economy) as Poly-Storying

In this article, we have examined the social mediatization of the former Minister of Finance of Greece, Yanis Varoufakis, as a case of *emplotment*. Drawing on insights and methods for the analysis of small stories on social media (Georgakopoulou, 2014, 2015), we advanced emplotment as a lens to understand (pan)mediatized vernacularizations of the economy that can be extended to other expert-based domains in the contemporary socio-political sphere.

Our analysis showed how incidents relating to the Greek bailout negotiations were creatively reworked in multi-semiotic rescriptings that emplotted Yanis Varoufakis as a character of 'thug life,' a 'gangsta,' an 'action superhero,' 'kicking ass,' and 'the Killah.' Such iterated characterizations, often expressed in incongruous couplings, became part of contests that set Varoufakis in clashing semiologies as the 'hero' vs. the 'villains,' the 'good guy' vs. 'bad guys' in 'David vs. Goliath' type of fights, echoing popular culture plots. Their transmedia distribution, enhanced by iterative, portable quotes ("you just killed the Troika") sedimented the iconography and biographing of a maverick, embattled Minister of Finance. Sharing practices also attested to audiences' participation

engagements with emblematic events in ways that often aligned with, and further rescripted, this characterization. Interestingly, the biographing of Yanis Varoufakis continues to this day, shaping and being shaped by shifting incongruous couplings: from his self-biographing as an 'outsider' by choice and conviction (Varoufakis, 2017) to others' fashioning of him as "the motorbike-riding academic-economist" who spoke out against the austerity policies during the eurozone crisis (Reuters, 2018, Nov. 25).

The above emplotment was found to implicate the Greek economy-in-crisis in more or less direct ways. For instance, the economy formed an integral part of recyclable and replicable plots in which Yanis Varoufakis figured as the main actor and came to stand almost metonymically for it. In these cases, the economy was concurrently rescripted as 'a battlefield' or as 'an agon,' i.e., as a site of political struggle (Lempert & Silverstein, 2012).

Our analysis suggests that emplotment is shaped by the affordances of *portability*, *replicability*, and *remixing* and is characterized by *cumulativeness*, *multiple authoring* (including Varoufakis's self-fashioning), and *trans-mediality*. Through distribution, certain positionings are amped up and sedimented, not least in the sense of becoming readily available. However, this is by no means a linear or deterministic process. The process of emplotment is best described as *poly-storying* rather than as a coherent biography, as traditional conceptualizations of the term would have it. *Poly-storying* is understood as the availability and/or remixing of different plots involving Varoufakis, as well as of the different possibilities for networked audiences to contribute to them.

Multiplicity and co-existence are key facets of poly-storying. As we saw in the analysis, Varoufakis's rescripting as a Troika-killer was done multi-semiotically and in many sites:

- linguistically, e.g., with a quote
- visually, e.g., with images
- in remixed ways, e.g., with memes
- as breaking news on Twitter
- as captions on T-shirts, etc.

At the same time, in the same space, for instance, in comments on a YouTube video, the context collapse (Wesch, 2008) of participation resulted in the co-existence of different contributions from different users. If we also take into account the possibility for diachronic contributions (Bou-Franch & Blitvitch, 2014) to video postings, poly-storying has to be viewed in principle as an open-ended communication process, with the potential for more and new layers of associations, particularly as discussions about Varoufakis and/or the Greek economy, and Europe more broadly, may be resurfacing as part of current affairs.¹⁴

From this point of view, poly-storying points to the importance of social mediatization affordances in creating and rendering available (new) multi-associations and parallel, alternative understandings or reworkings of issues of public interest. It would be useful for the studies of the Greek and Eurozone financial crisis to recognise such understandings as part of the historiographies of the crisis. There is also scope for

exploring their role in making available anti-austerity voices that depart from the tabloid and austerity-supporting stereotypes of the early days that painted crisis as the fault of Greece and the Greeks (e.g., Wodak & Angouri, 2014).

The role of poly-storying in creating celebrities out of experts also needs to be further explored as part of studies of shifts into 'pop' politics or *politainment* (cf. Baym & Burnett, 2009), particularly on social media. It can specifically afford analytical routes into the (re)appraisal of satire, humour, and emotion in doing, communicating, and engaging with politics (cf. van Hout & Burger, 2016). In the light of this article, affective responses are intimately linked with jointly (re)creating and remixing plots as part of networked audiences' engagement with expert-based domains. In a similar vein, the study of social mediatization through the lens of the emplotment of key individuals as part of self-mediatization practices in panmediated environments can be a useful extension of sociolinguistic studies of vernacularization, so as to begin to address the increasingly porous boundaries between official/unofficial, professional/amateur, and expert/lay engagements. In particular, a focus on emplotment can offer a complementary analytical route to the study of linguistic forms, multi-modal resources, and their shifts across contexts (re-contextualizations and resemiotizations). In this way, it can add insights into the study of how mediatization processes create indexical links of specific semiotic resources with the specific personalities of politicians, which in turn become their 'message': 'who they are' becomes a proxy for 'what they stand for' (Silverstein, 2011).¹⁵ As such, our focus on emplotment can prove a productive point of entry into explorations

of the increasingly prominent and consequential post-truth public engagements with political and economic life, in particular in relation to expert-based 'facts.'

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Appendix

Table 2. Varoufakis' self-reflexive storytelling

Media	Date	Title
<i>Sky TV</i>	Jan.19, 2015	<i>Istories</i> (interview by Alexis Papachelas)

<i>The New Yorker</i>	August, 3 2015	<i>The Greek Warrior: how a radical finance minister took on Europe – and failed</i>
<i>The GUARDIAN</i>	April, 5 2016	<i>Why we must save the EU</i>
<i>BBC</i>	March, 31 2016	<i>Hard Talk</i> (Interview by Stephen Sackur)
<i>Open Democracy</i>	May, 13 2016	<i>Europe and the spectre of democracy: Michel Feher interviews Yanis Varoufakis</i>
<i>Shedia</i>	July, 18 2016	<i>There is an epic struggle between light and darkness. Who wins? – Yanis Varoufakis in-depth interview</i>

Notes

² We enclose the term ‘lay’ in quotation marks, as we are aware of the difficulty in establishing clear-cut distinctions between members of the public and ‘expert’ contributors. At the same time, in line with Thornborrow (2015, p. 3), the benefits of using the term ‘lay’ participants lie in providing a way of distinguishing them from other categories of participant: those who are employed by the media network as hosts or presenters; other media professionals, including journalists and politicians; and those who are labelled ‘experts’ and who often represent institutions or organisations of some sort or another. As such a distinguishing category, the term lay “works – but only up to a certain point. [...] .. to label them ‘ordinary’ members of the public does not fully capture

the complex local identities and situated expertise that their participation frequently involves” (p. 3).

³ Social media analysts have noted the pressures and salience of affordances for the creation of ‘branded’ selves online, i.e., commoditized selves modelled on marketing and advertising (e.g., Marwick, 2013) that become (disproportionately) known for a specific aspect of their lives. This branding is conducive to the creation of celebrity selves, even among ordinary users (‘micro-celebrities’), with friends and followers encouraged to behave as ‘fans’ (Senft, 2013).

⁴ Affordances, a concept originating in psychology, is commonly used in relation to social media communication to describe the users’ “perceived possibilities for action and constraints’ in different social media platforms” (Barton & Lee, 2013).

⁵ This research received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013).

⁶ The incident is described in some detail in Yanis Varoufakis’ memoir *Adults in the Room* (pp. 164-172) under the heading “Ultimatum”.

⁷ As defined by the late hip-hop artist Tupac Shakur (1971-1996), “a thug is someone who is going through struggles, has gone through struggles, and continues to live day by day with nothing for them. That person is a thug. [A]nd the life they are living is the thug life” (Irvin Morris, 2012, p. 29).

⁸ That said, despite the reclamation of the term ‘thug,’ the co-existing meaning of a criminal opens up possibilities for alternative associations of such popular symbolisms.

⁹ The creators of the comic consulted with Yanis Varoufakis during the production phase in addition to drawing heavily on allegories of the present situation that feature Varoufakis’ book *The Global Minotaur* (2011) in their attempt to provide a popular guide to the Greek bailout negotiations of that period.

¹⁰ ‘I just died in your arms tonight’ is a popular song by the rock band Cutting Crew, released in 1986.

¹¹ Searchable talk online is a tangible indication of such associations.

¹² Many respondents, for instance, question the truthfulness of the commenter’s young age.

¹³ The well-attested YouTube conflicts and rants (e.g., Pihlaja, 2014) are notably a minority in our data: Most comments are atomized. Economics commentary that is not grounded in lived realities but is offered in general, nation-state terms (e.g., the Greek people), which can lead to oppositional (us vs. them) exchanges, is also infrequent. Only nine comments out of the 159 replies were of this kind.

¹⁴ Chains of more recent rescriptings are outside the scope of the present article, although worthy of attention in further research.

¹⁵ This has so far been mainly explored in relation to the role of mass media.

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